

COUNCIL FOR LABOR & ECONOMIC GROWTH
Work Readiness Credential Proposal
December 2007

On June 4, 2007, a charge was given to the Council for Labor & Economic Growth (CLEG) to recommend whether Michigan should create a statewide Career Readiness Certificate (CRC). Specifically, the CLEG was asked to:

- Evaluate efforts in other states that are creating CRC systems;
- Determine whether Michigan employers would embrace a statewide CRC system;
- Recommend to the Governor whether Michigan should create a CRC system; and
- Develop a concrete plan, including CRC system design and implementation.

Based on the June 2007 charge, CLEG, through its combined Accelerating Re-employment and Increasing Educational Attainment Committees, has accomplished the following:

- Researched multiple states that have considered and/or actually implemented various types of Career Readiness Certificates;
- Surveyed 25 Michigan Works! Agencies;
- Surveyed employers; and
- Evaluated presentations from ACT WorkKeys, Equipped for the Future National Work Readiness Credential, and JobFit from Profiles International.

As a result of this research and analysis, the combined committees:

- Have concluded that a statewide Career Readiness Certificate system would be of value both to employers and job seekers.
- Believe the appropriate system to recommend to the Governor for adoption is the ACT WorkKeys National Career Readiness Certificate (NCRC) as a mandatory statewide credential for use throughout the state's workforce system
- Recommend the availability of soft skills training for certificate holders as a supplement to the ACT WorkKeys NCRC . Standards and/or approved soft skills training curriculum to be developed.
- Encourage the use of an optional job placement tool, JobFit by Profiles, Int.
- Ask Council staff to engage appropriate state agencies in developing a solid estimate of implementation strategy options and the associated costs with each choice. Once that work is completed, the committees will possess all of the analysis needed to finalize for Council action our recommendation to the Governor as to whether Michigan should create a CRC system.

ACT WorkKeys NCRC and soft skills training will ensure to employers that workers will have necessary skills, and JobFit will ensure the right fit, with the ability to match individuals to the right job. This combination will satisfy employers' needs for individuals who possess both the work skills and soft skills needed for employment in the 21st century.

This recommendation is based on the following:

- ACT WorkKeys is well-established nationwide, has been in business for 15 years, with documented employer testimonials and case studies that are available online.

- ACT WorkKeys aligns with the Michigan Merit Exam whereby high school seniors are already being given two of the three ACT WorkKeys assessments. This high school assessment, combined with a statewide ACT WorkKeys NCRC, will better align business and education in the state.
- Adoption of ACT WorkKeys will establish opportunities for collaboration with organizations in several areas of the state already employing ACT WorkKeys and/or ACT WorkKeys NCRC. Examples include the West Michigan and Mid-Michigan WIRED grant regions, at least eight Michigan Works! Agencies, several joint labor/management apprenticeship training programs, and the Michigan Career and Technical Institute (MCTI).
- ACT WorkKeys will provide, for the first time, a baseline of data that identifies the skill levels of job seekers in the state, and a base from which to make improvements.
- ACT WorkKeys was the only assessment tool that included remediation components (WIN and KeyTrain), which will allow lower-assessed individuals to improve their skills.
- WorkKeys is a valid, reliable testing measure, developed by the highly regarded ACT.
- ACT WorkKeys is meaningful to employers because the assessments are based on skills that employees need in order to do their jobs.
- Augmenting the ACT WorkKeys NCRC with a soft skills training component addresses a need identified by many employers.
- The use of Job Fit by Profiles International will match the right person with the right job.
- The recommendation to use different products provides a “tool box” approach, giving the MWAs the ability to use ACT WorkKeys and JobFit, and other “soft skills” components.

It is further recommended that:

- System design and implementation be done with the participation and input of multiple partners within the state’s workforce and education system. If this recommendation is accepted, the state will convene an implementation workgroup to consist of representatives from the Department of Labor & Economic Growth: including Bureau of Career Education, Bureau of Workforce Programs (BWP), Michigan Rehabilitation Services (MRS), and Commission for the Blind; the Michigan Department of Education; the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC); the Michigan Works! Association and/or its member agencies; the WIRED Region areas; and any other partners as deemed appropriate. This work group would develop an outcome driven work plan for implementation throughout the state to address infrastructure and cost considerations.
- DLEG develop a funding strategy that considers and includes a negotiated statewide cost benefit, employer co-pays, and strategic utilization of state funding resources to avoid an unfunded mandate.
- The ACT WorkKeys NCRC be included as a recognized credential for individuals improving their skills under the No Worker Left Behind statewide initiative.